

Geographic Differentials in Functional Difficulty among Older Persons in the Philippines

OBJECTIVES

Previous studies on functional disability among older persons in the Philippines were all based on survey data and were limited only at the national level, failing to capture the wide diversity in the health status of Filipino older persons at the sub-national level. To address this gap this paper aims to:

- 1.) Examine patterns in functional difficulty among older persons in the Philippines at the regional level.
- 2.) Identify correlates of functional difficulty among Filipino older persons.

DATA

- 2010 Philippine Census of Population and Housing (CPH)
- First census in the Philippines that included questions on functional difficulty
- Analysis is limited to adults aged 60 and over

Functional difficulty indicators were captured by the question "Does ____ have any difficulty/problem in ____?"

1. Walking or climbing steps
2. Self-caring (bathing or dressing)
3. Seeing, even when wearing eyeglasses
4. Hearing, even when using hearing aid
5. Remembering or concentrating
6. Communicating using his/her usual language

For this analysis only the indicators for mobility and self-care are considered. Out of these two indicators a scale was constructed with four categories: (1) no limitation, (2) mobility limitation only, (3) self-care limitations only, and (4) both mobility and self-care limitations. Due to very low distribution categories 2 to 4 were collapsed into one category in the multivariate analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Logistic regression estimating the probability of having functional difficulty or not was used.

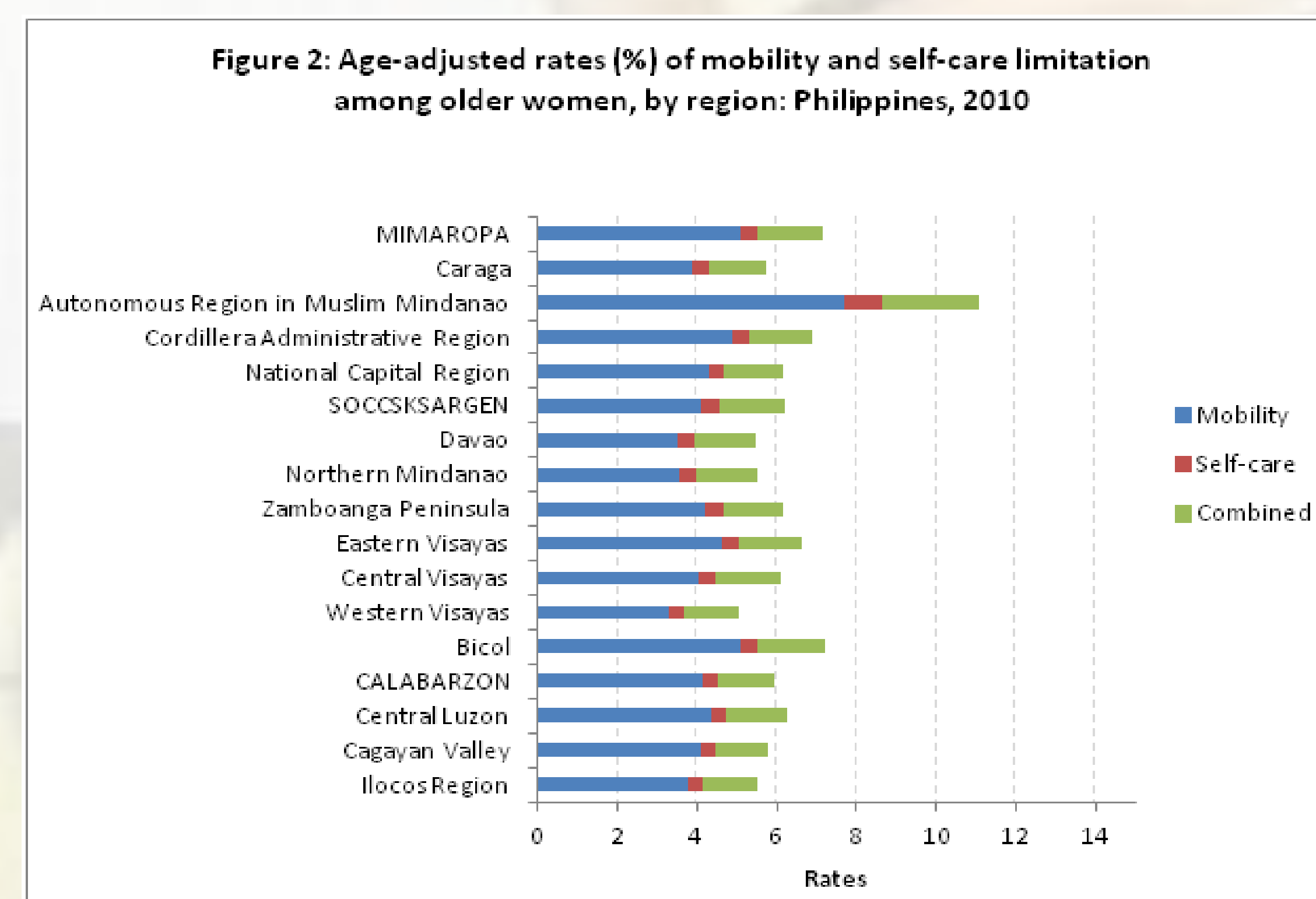
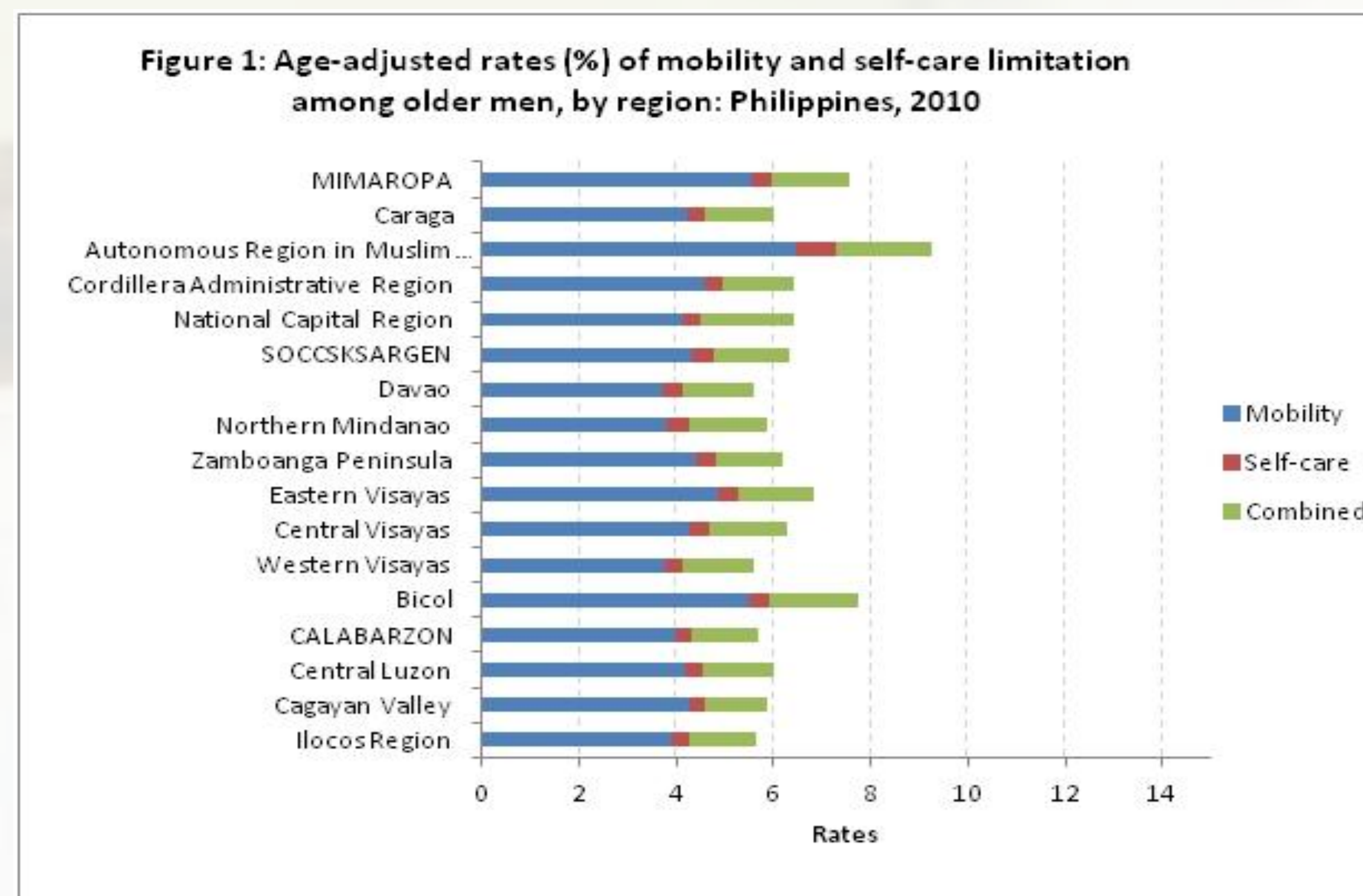
PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Based on the 2010 census only around 6% of those aged 60 and over reported a difficulty with either mobility or self-care task. The prevalence of these limitations increases with advancing age. Among older men it steadily increased from 3% among the 60-64 age groups to 23% among the 85 years old and over. The corresponding percentages for older women were 2% and 28%, respectively.

In general, rates for mobility limitations among older people in the Philippines are higher than self-care limitations, regardless of sex and region of residence.

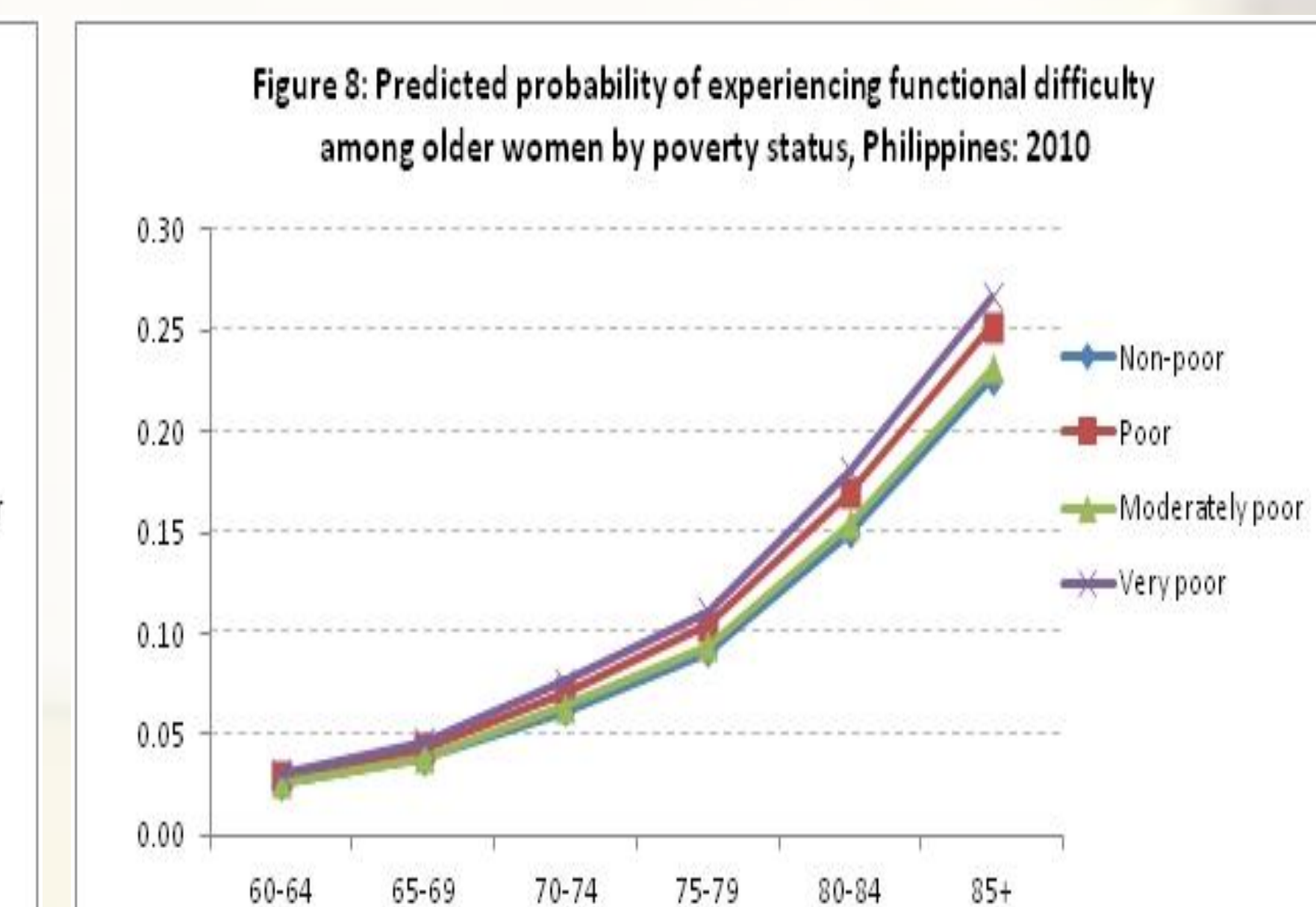
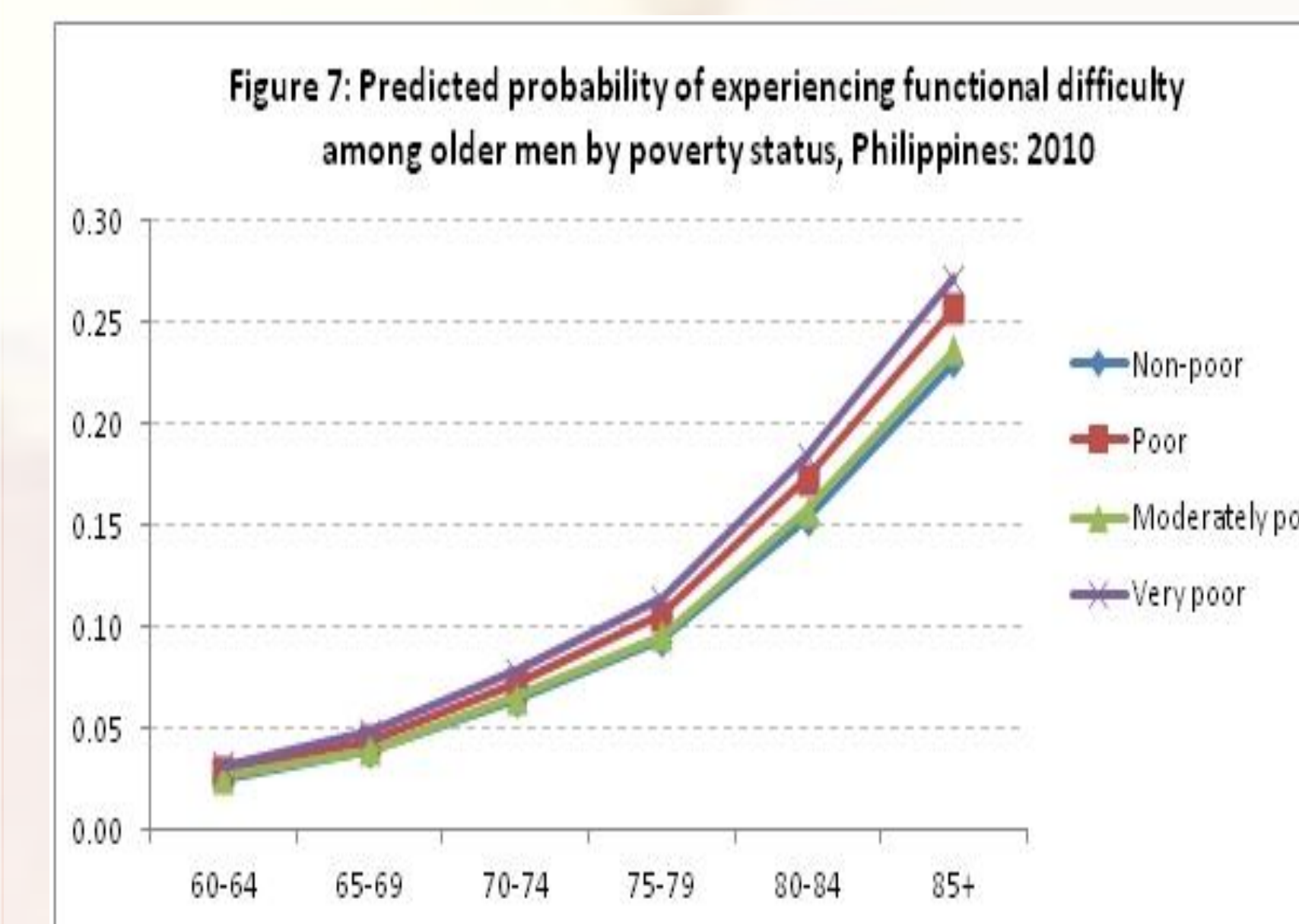
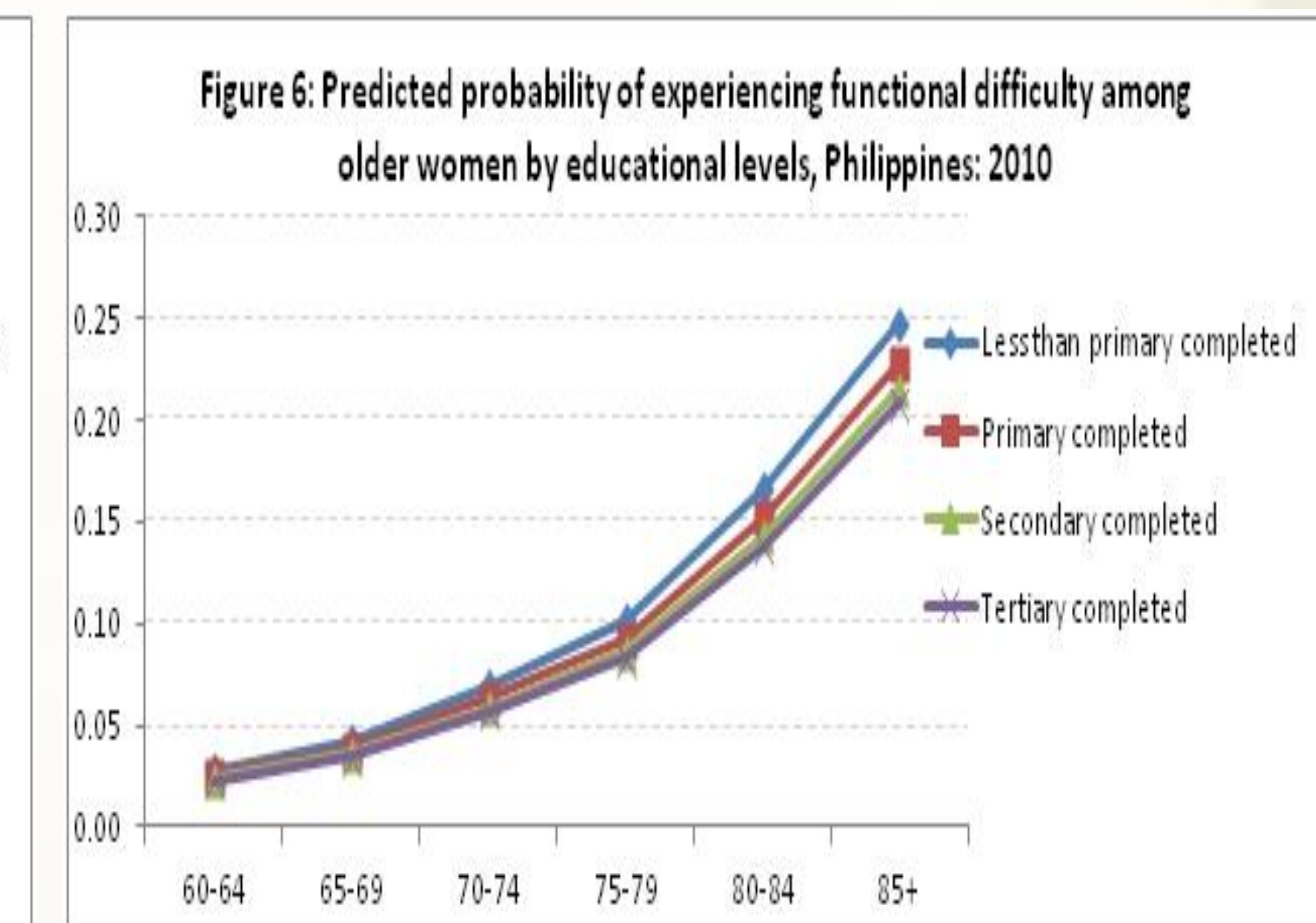
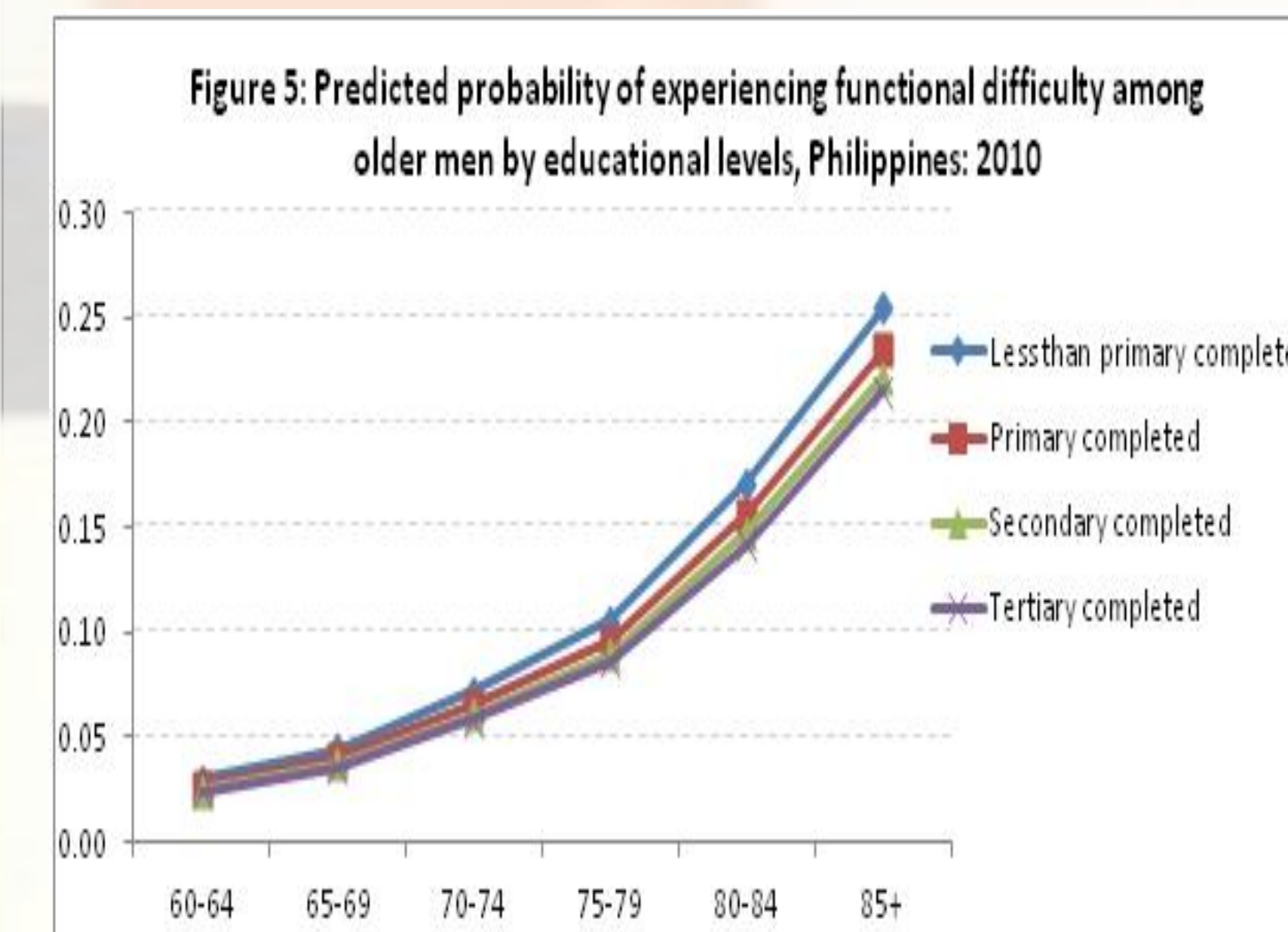
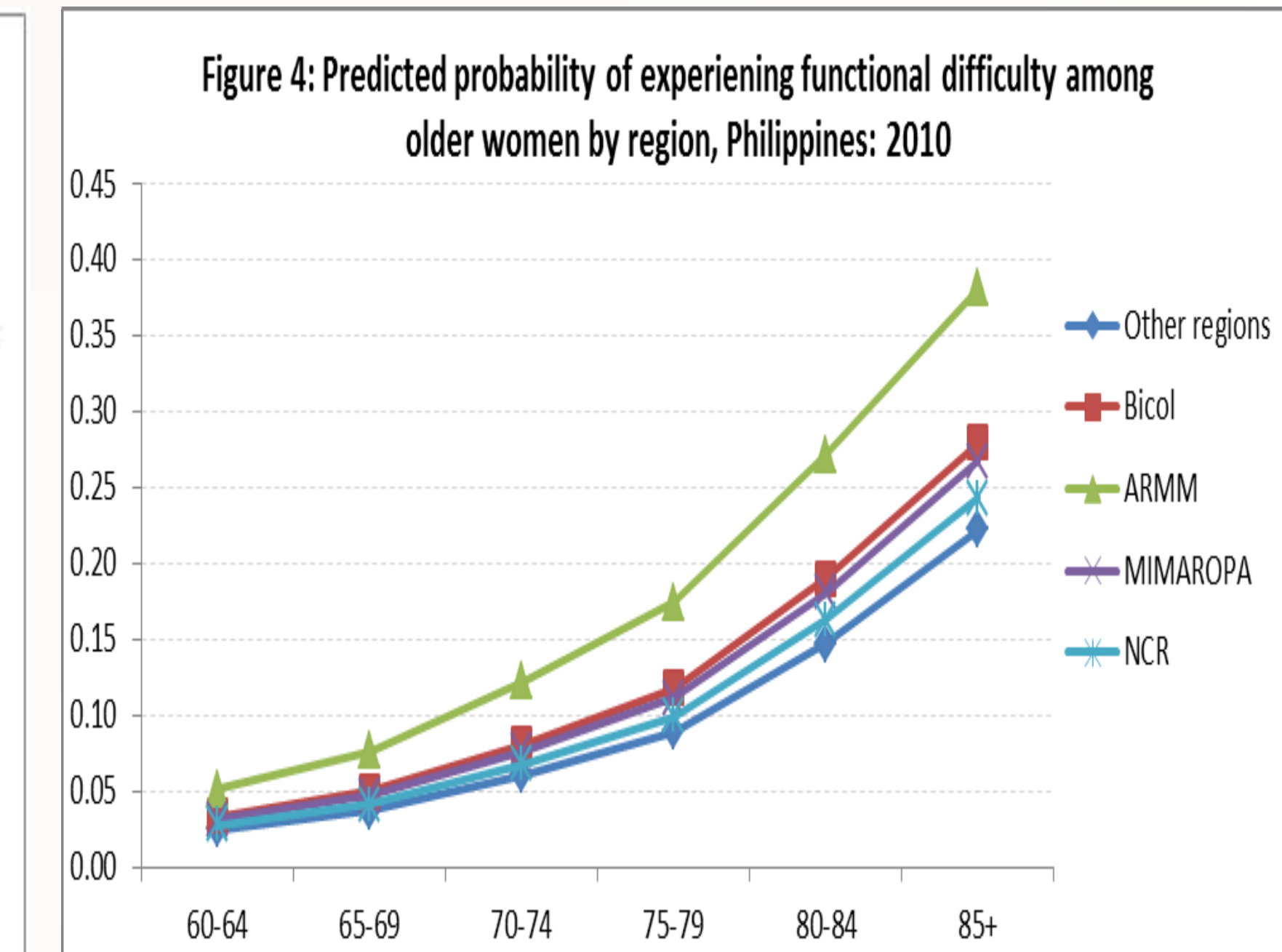
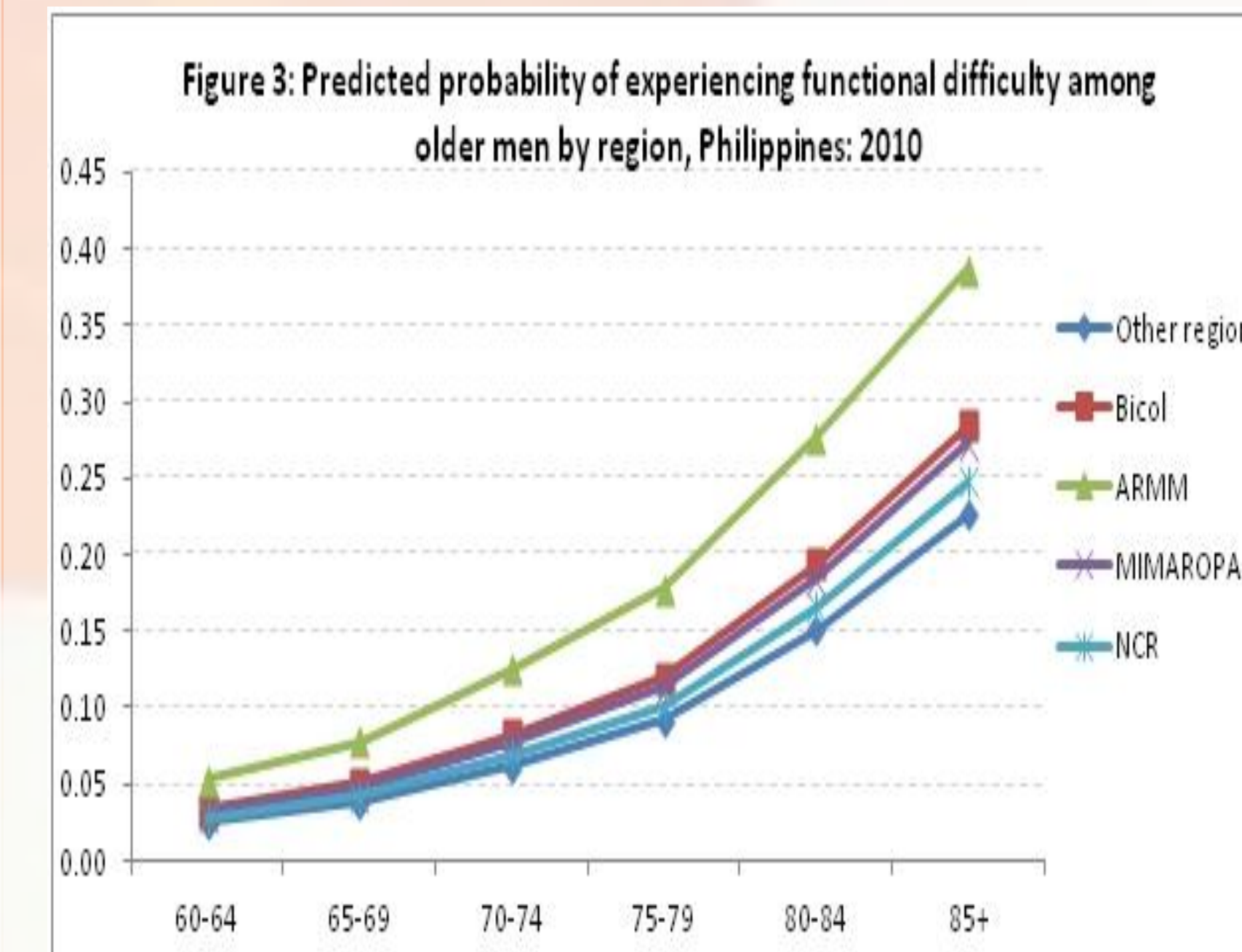
Older women also tend to report self-care and combined limitations with regularity than do older men.

Geographic disparity exists in the prevalence of functional difficulty in the Philippines. For instance, regional differences in mobility limitations can reach up to 2.7 % among men and 4.4% among women (Figures 1 and 2).



Mobility, self-care and combined limitation rates are consistently highest in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), followed by Bicol and MIMAROPA. These geographic differentials persist even after controlling for other factors in the multivariate analysis (Figures 3 and 4).

The effects of other control variables are also consistent with previous literature. Men are more likely to report functional difficulty than women. Higher education and socioeconomic status are associated with lower risks of functional limitations (Figures 5 to 8). The formerly married (e.g. widowed, separated) men and women have also higher probability of experiencing functional difficulties compared with the currently married. Meanwhile, there is no significant variation between urban and rural residents when it comes to prevalence of functional difficulties.



SUMMARY

The prevalence of mobility and self-care limitations among older persons in the Philippines is relatively low, but there exists wide differentials in the prevalence of these limitations across the 17 regions of the country. Functional difficulty rates among older men and women are highest in the ARMM, an autonomous region in the Southern part of the Philippines that also recorded the highest poverty incidence in the country. This geographic differential still persists even controlling for other factors, such as age, sex, education, poverty status, and level of urbanization.

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Note:
Results are preliminary. Please do not cite without permission from the author.